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Probate Case May Cast Sunlight on Pedophile Jeffrey Epstein's Interactions with the Influential in the V.I.

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Protesters held up photographs of Jeffrey Epstein outside the federal courthouse in Manhattan in July, 2019. By. STEPHANIE KEITH/GETTY IMAGES

ST. THOMAS — The V.I. Department of Justice's civil claims against the half-billion dollar estate of Jeffrey Epstein is casting an unwanted spotlight on the dead pedophile's interactions with the Virgin Islands' rich and powerful.

Attorney General Denise George stepped up the pressure on Epstein's estate by amending a civil enforcement action brought in January to include the names of the estate executors, lawyers Darren Indyke and Richard Kahn, as co-defendants.

In court documents filed this week, Ms. George also added Epstein's Red Hook-based Southern Trust Co. as a co-defendant for allegedly being used to conceal Epstein's years of alleged trafficking and sexual abuse of young women and underage girls. Naming Southern Trust as a co-defendant in the civil litigation potentially opens company records and activities to public scrutiny — a move that may cast a chill across some of the territory's prominent social and political quarters.

While Epstein, personally, was in the background, Southern Trust Co. was well known in political circles. And the territory, according to the Department of Justice, is a place where Epstein got his way.

Consider:

Under former Governor John de Jongh, Southern Trust obtained lucrative tax breaks. At the time, de Jongh's wife, Cecile, on paper, managed Southern Trust operation.

Southern Trust gave thousands of dollars in campaign contributions to Virgin Islands politicians, including current members of the Legislature and the territory's delegate to Congress. When the largesse came to light last year, politicians were quick to distance themselves from Epstein by returning the money or donating equal amounts to charity.

Through Southern Trust, Epstein became a friend of the well-heeled in the territory. Virgin Islands nonprofits — such as the exclusive Antilles School on St. Thomas — turned to Southern Trust again and again for money. The company donated thousands of dollars to Antilles' "Annual Fund," which helps cover tuition for low-income students. Epstein handed out 100 Microsoft tablet computers when the V.I. Department of Education sought support for a science, technology, engineering and math program.

A \$300 Million Shell Company

According to the Amending Complaint filed by the VIDOJ, Southern Trust was incorporated as Financial Informatics Inc. 2011 but changed its name a year later. It was housed in 3,200-square-foot of office-space in American Yacht Harbor (AYH), the commercial heart of Red Hook on St. Thomas. Epstein was a passive investor in AYH, owning 50% of the East End marina.

Epstein is listed in V.I. Economic Development Authority (VIEDA) records as President/Director and sole owner of Southern Trust. The records show that in 2018, Southern Trust assets reached \$391 million — and it also held a precious 10-year EDC tax break, guaranteeing 100 reductions of business property taxes, gross receipts, excises taxes, as well as other sweetheart incentives.

The government granted Southern Trust EDC status because the firm was, ostensibly, developing sophisticated algorithms to mine DNA databases. It remains unclear through public records what type of data mining — if any — actually occurred.

In court documents, Ms. George alleged Southern Trust was a shell that helped hide Epstein's perversions. In a January civil complaint, the VIDOJ alleged that Epstein used a web of shell companies, charitable organizations and other corporate entities to conceal years of rape, human trafficking and other abuses of women and young females on Little St. James and Great St. James off the east coast of St. Thomas.

That 49-page complaint alleged that Epstein lured his young victims to Little St. James with promises of modeling jobs, contracts and help paying for their education. Once ferried to the

island on Epstein's private helicopter or boat, his victims were trapped and held in sexual servitude, abuse and forced labor.

New Filing

In the latest court filings, Ms. George alleged that the co-executors of the Epstein estate, Mr. Indyke and Mr. Kahn, had conflicts of interest because of their role in Epstein companies named as defendants in the case. The V.I. government has also placed liens on assets worth more than \$577 million left behind after Epstein's death in a New York jail last summer.

Lawyers for the estate argued that the Virgin Islands' liens against the estate cash and properties were delaying settlements with Epstein's alleged victims.

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